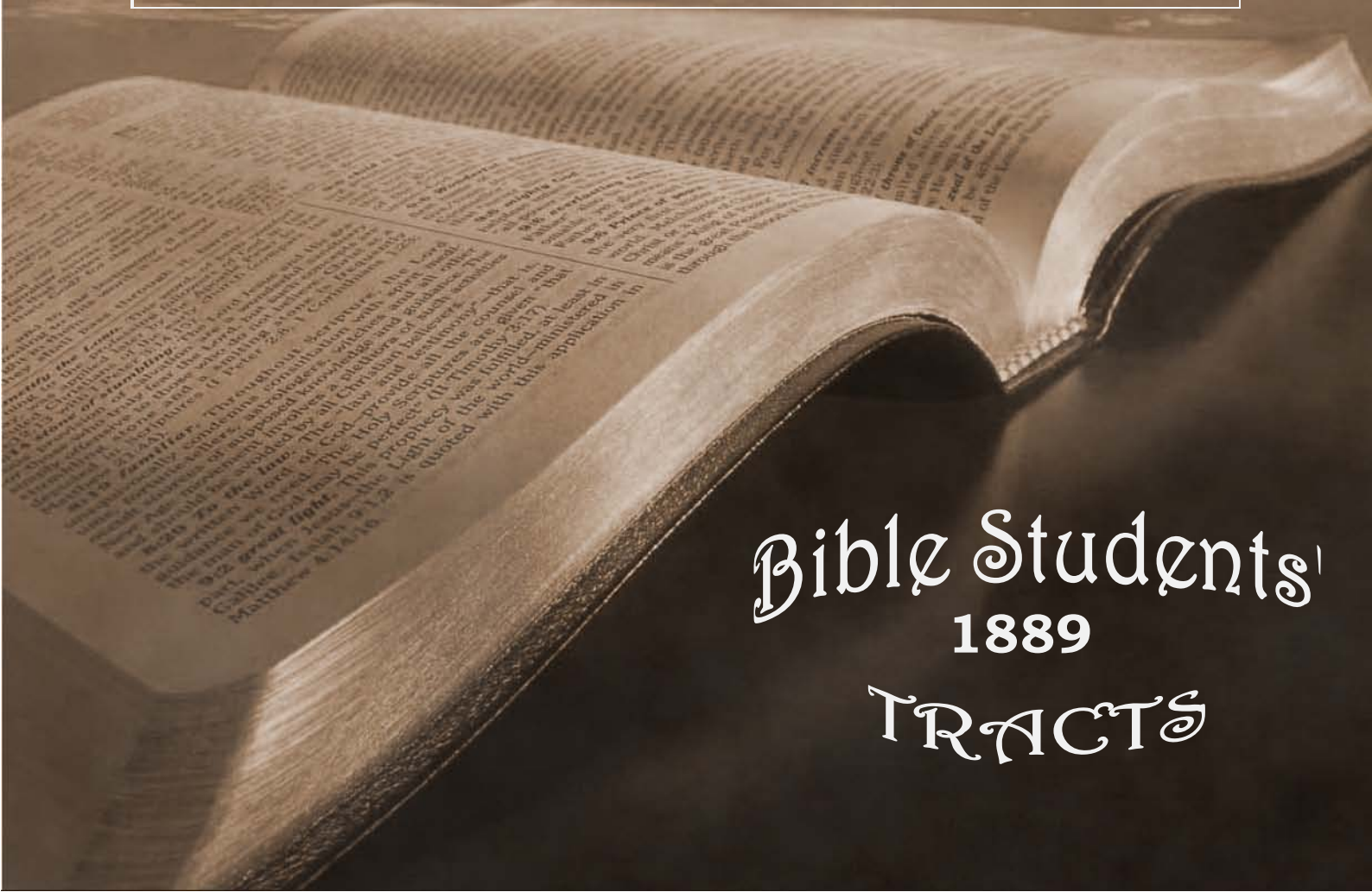
Old Theology Quarterly

No. 3—Protestants, Awake! The Spirit of the Great Reformation Dying. How Priestcraft Now Operates



Bible Students'
1889
Tracts

SAMPLE COPY. Box.....

THE OLD THEOLOGY.

PROTESTANTS AWAKE!

The Spirit of the Great Reformation DYING.

HOW PRIESTCRAFT NOW OPERATES.

"Inquire for the old paths." Jer. 6 : 16.

BIBLE STUDENTS'
1889.
TRACTS.

Entered as Second Class Mail Matter, at the Post-office, Allegheny, Pa.

Old Theology Tracts

FOR

BIBLE STUDENTS.

No. 3, 1890.

PUBLISHED BY THE
TOWER TRACT SOCIETY,
ALLEGHENY, PA.

Quarterly, 6 cts. a year, 2 cts. per copy.

10	copies	quarterly,	1	yr.	(40 tracts),	50 cents.
25	"	"	1	"	(100 "),	$1.00
50	"	"	1	"	(200 "),	1.75
100	"	"	1	"	(400 "),	3.00
500	"	"	1	"	(2000 "),	13.50
1000	"	"	1	"	(4000 "),	25.00
3000	"	"	1	"	(12000 "),	68.00

*** We specially commend, both to honest skeptics and to saints, "The Plan of the Ages." No book of its size, known to us, so fully unfolds the divine plan revealed in the Scriptures. It is a veritable "Bible Key," and is well described as "A helping hand for Bible students." We can supply it by mail, cloth bound, for $1, or in paper covers for 25 cents, or will loan it to the poor, who will promise a careful reading and to pay return postage.

— THESE TRACTS ARE NOT COPYRIGHTED. —
— ANYONE MAY REPUBLISH. —

PROTESTANTS, AWAKE!

THE SPIRIT OF THE GREAT REFORMATION — DYING. —

HOW PRIESTCRAFT NOW OPERATES.

The attitude of Rome on the public school question in this country, her increasing power and prestige in places of authority and influence throughout "Christendom," the attention she called to herself in the late celebration of the Papal Jubilee, the flatteries and honors she received from crowned heads and even from this great Republic, together with her renewed claim of temporal power and her manifest determination to regain it, whenever the auspicious moment to strike for it shall come, are facts which should arouse every Protestant, every true Christian, to a sense of the danger to which liberty and truth and righteousness are exposed from their old and wily foe and relentless persecutor, the Church of Rome.

The underlying principle of the Great Reformation, to which all Protestants look back with pride, was the right of individual judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures, in opposition to the papal dogma of submission to *clerical authority* and interpretation. On this very point was the whole issue of the great movement. It was a grand and blessed, strike for liberty of conscience, for an open Bible, and the right to believe and obey its teachings regardless of the usurped authority and vain traditions of the self-exalted clergy of Rome. Had not this principle been firmly held by the early Reformers, they never could have effected a reformation, and the wheels of progress would have continued to stick in the mire of papal traditions and perverted interpretation. The danger, now, is that the same influences threaten to bind Protestants as securely as Romanists are bound, to the judgment and religious decrees of a system, instead of leaving faith to the intelligence, study and judgment of each individual.

The foundation of the great Apostasy (Papacy) was laid in the separation of a class, called the "clergy," from the church of believers in general, who, in contra-

distinction, came to be known as the "laity." This was not done in a day, but gradually. Those who had been chosen from their own number, by the various congregations, to minister to or *serve* them in spiritual things, gradually came to consider themselves a superior order or class, above their fellow-Christians who elected them. They gradually came to regard their position as an *office* rather than a *service* and sought each other's companionship in councils, etc., as "Clergymen," and order or rank among them followed.

Next they felt it beneath their dignity to be elected by the congregation they were to serve, and to be installed by it as its servants; and to carry out the idea of office and to support the dignity of a "clergyman," they deemed it better policy to abandon the primitive method by which any believer who had the ability had the liberty to teach, and decided that no man could minister to a congregation except a "clergyman," and that no one could become a clergyman except the clergy so decided and installed him in office.

Their councils, at first harmless if not profitable, began gradually to *suggest* what each individual should believe, and came finally to *decreeing* what should be con-

sidered orthodox and what should be considered heresy, or, in other words, deciding what each individual must believe. There the right of private judgment by individual Christians was trampled upon, the "clergy" were put in power as the only and official interpreters of God's Word, and the consciences of the "laity" were led into captivity to those errors of doctrine which evil-minded, ambitious, scheming, and often self-deluded men among the clergy were able to establish and falsely label, *Truth*. And having thus, gradually and cunningly, secured control of the church's conscience, as the apostles had foretold, they "privily brought in damnable heresies," and palmed them off upon the conscience-fettered laity as truths. —2 Pet. 2 : 1.

One result was, that the Bible took second place to the opinions of the clergy in these councils, thus discounting the value of the only true standard of faith. Another result was, that this self-exalted clergy, becoming more and more vain and boastful, finally concluded that *they* alone constituted the *Church*, and that the laity bore to the clergy the relationship of children, "*children* of the Church," and were not to be classed as joint-heirs with the

clergy, to the promises of coming glory and honor and association with Christ in the Millennial reign.

When the Roman empire was falling into ruins, these clerical schemers, by multitudinous crafty arts and intrigues, too numerous to be here detailed, contrived to work their own advancement to political power and influence, until, as the great papal hierarchy, they gained the rulership of the world, electing one of their number king of kings and lord of lords—the pope. Thereafter the church, instead of being "subject to the powers that be," assumed and used power over the world and demanded universal obedience. Instead of suffering at the hands of the ungodly, this corrupt church reigned; instead of being persecuted for righteousness' sake, she was flattered and honored, and became the persecutor of all who differed from her, rejecting the decrees of her Councils, and exercised their right of private judgment in the study of the Bible.

To account for this changed condition of things, the claim was then made that the doctrine that Christ would *come and set up* his Millennial kingdom and subdue all things to his rule of righteousness, as taught by the apostles and held by Chris-

tians in the first and second centuries, had been misunderstood. The claim was set forth that those Scriptures which referred to the Millennial blessedness and reign of Christ and the church, as Kings and Priests to rule and teach and bless the world, were to be fulfilled by the church without Christ Jesus, her Lord and head; that he was *represented* in reign and glory and power by the successive popes who claimed to be his vicars or representatives, and as such to be infallible, as Christ would be.

This claimed Millennial reign is dated from about A. D. 800, and since then, the line of popes, in Christ's name and stead, have applied to themselves all the titles, promises and predictions of Scripture which relate to Christ and his Millennial glory. And thus the popes, as falsely representing Christ, the Head, and the general clergy, as falsely representing the Body, Bride or Church of Christ, constitute the Antichrist, or false Christ and his false kingdom, predicted by Daniel, Paul and John, as well as by our Lord and others.

This *counterfeit* of Christ's Millennial Kingdom could not indeed resurrect the dead to glory, power and immortality, as

the Scriptures predict (1 Cor. 15 : 42–44; Rev. 20 : 6), to live and reign on earth; but as a pope could *represent* Christ, so bishops, cardinals, etc., could *represent* the saints of the first resurrection; and though these could not possess the power, glory, etc., promised to all who will have part in the first resurrection, and share in Christ's Millennial reign, yet those glories could be and were counterfeited or represented, in the clothing, etc., of the hierarchical class. And the master-artists of the world were engaged to paint and gild and bestud with blazing precious stones the papal throne, and to so arrange windows and mirrors, lights and shadows, etc., that, on certain occasions, as nearly as possible a supernatural radiance might seem to the people to emanate from the person of the pope, as, clad in gorgeous clothing and flashing with jewels, he sat in regal state, the false head of the apostate church, personating and counterfeiting the true head of the true church and his Millennial glory and power.*

---

* For a fuller account of Antichrist's doings and great swelling words, see—"The Time is at Hand," a book of 360 pages, sold retail at the wholesale value, 25 cents, post paid. Address—TOWER TRACT SOCIETY, Allegheny, Pa.

The terrible state of ignorance, superstition and priestcraft, which prevailed for centuries under this counterfeit kingdom of Christ, known in history as "the dark ages," was broken by the Great Reformation movement of the sixteenth century, —when Luther and his coadjutors, recognizing the true character of Papacy's kingdom, in sermons and tracts and posters boldly denounced and exposed the counterfeit, and pointed out some of the errors and blasphemies of that deceptive system.

And Luther noted, too, that the start of the great Apostasy was in the error that the clergy were a divinely appointed order, distinct and separate from the remainder of the church. He saw that the reign of Christ was not fulfilled by Papacy, and that the promises, that those who suffer with Christ shall *reign* with him, were not made to a clerical class, but to all the consecrated, faithful church of Christ. Did space permit, we would give samples of some of Luther's forcible utterances on this subject, which show that he had a very clear idea of the relationship which should exist between the church in general and those who minister to or serve it; even though he found it impossible to ful-

ly bring his ideas into practice, owing to the gross darkness and superstition of the long priest-ridden people. He clearly points out Peter's words, "Ye are a royal priesthood," as relating to the general church, and not to a clerical class, and denounces the assumptions of the Papacy on this subject, although he himself had been one of the favored "clergy" class.

True, Papacy does not now attempt a despotic sway of the world, nor does she loudly and publicly assert her claim to divine authority as God's Kingdom among men. This, she is crafty enough to see, would not be wise policy in this nineteenth century and under present circumstances. Hence, Romanists do not *now* make these doctrines prominent; but their theological works do present such views, unblushingly, and Papacy's boast is, that she never changes. The same claims to divine authority to rule the world and to punish and torture in the present life and to damn to all eternity, as heretics, all who will not accept her claims and obey *her* "royal priesthood," would soon be heard again, were ignorance and superstition to again thoroughly enslave the masses.

Now, while cunningly avoiding the question of civil power over the world,

she retains her grip upon the minds and consciences of her people, by proclaiming her chief cleric, the pope, infallible; and by having him loudly assert his spiritual power (?) and influence, to compensate for his loss of earthly power. Thus, to display his spiritual authority and power, Pope Leo XIII. recently announced *the liberation of millions of souls from the pains of purgatory*, with as much apparent candor as President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation which set free millions of slaves in the South. And strange to say, the masses of Romanists, even to-day, believe this monstrous, wholesale fraud.

THE PROTESTANT CLERGY.

Protestants generally, except Episcopalians, admit the fallacy of these claims of Papacy. And yet the habit of centuries, of regard for certain forms and ceremonies and for a certain class of self-exalted fellow-mortals, called the clergy, still clings to the people, and the Protestant clergy consequently receive much of the same homage and reverence against which the reformers of the sixteenth century protested.

Nor can we wonder much that even

some very earnest, honest ministers accept this customary submission and reverence of the people, and the title of Reverend, and that superstitious respect which looks up to them as possessed of almost superhuman authority as religious leaders. It is a general weakness of the fallen human nature to take all the respect, honor and authority others are willing to accord. And then, too, many ministers have become possessed of the same ideas, and really believe themselves to be worthy of homage and reverence. Many get the old papal idea that the ruling and teaching of the church belong to the "clergy" by divine arrangement. We all know how much easier it is to "*receive* honor one of another" (John 5 : 44), than to refuse it, and tell the people the plain truth which Peter so clearly enunciated (1 Pet. 2 : 9), that the entire church of Christ—that is, all fully consecrated and self-sacrificing believers — constitute the royal priesthood, and not a self-appointed lordly class in it or above it, calling itself the "clergy."

But as for a clerical class, God does not recognize it as his elect teachers; nor has he chosen many of his teachers from its ranks. The mere claim of any man to

be a teacher is no proof that he is one by divine appointment. That false teachers would arise in the church, who would pervert the truth, was foretold. The church, therefore, is not to blindly accept whatever any teacher may set forth, but should prove the teaching of those whom they have reason to believe to be God's messengers, by the one infallible standard —the Word of God. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. 8 : 20.) Thus while the church needs teachers, and cannot understand God's Word without them, yet the church individually—each by himself and for himself, and *himself only*—must fill the important office of *judge*, to decide, according to the infallible standard, God's Word, whether the teaching be true or false, and whether the claimed teacher is a true teacher by divine appointment.

God himself provides these teachers; they are *his gifts* to the church. (1 Cor. 12 : 28.)

Any superior wisdom and ability granted such, is as much for the sake and for the good of the other members of Christ's church as for themselves. And *whichever* of God's children comes to see some important truth generally disregarded by

the church and finds himself possessed of ability to make it *clear* to others, should do so, should teach it, to whomsoever has an ear to hear. If a new truth, it belongs to the entire household, and he who keeps it from them, for any cause, defrauds the family of God, misuses a great favor, and deprives himself of a ministry (service).

Notice, that the self-constituted clergy are not teachers, and do not and cannot appoint teachers; nor can they in any degree qualify them. Our Lord Jesus keeps that part in his own power, and the so-called clergy have nothing to do with it, fortunately, else there never would be any teachers; for the "clergy," both Papal and Protestant, strive constantly to prevent *any change* from those conditions of thought and ruts of misbelief, in which each sect has settled down. By their course of action they say, Bring us no new unfoldings of truth, however beautiful; and do not disturb the heaps of rubbish and human tradition we call our creeds, by digging down through them and bringing forth the Old Theology of the Lord and the apostles, to contradict us and to disturb our schemes and plans and methods. Let us alone! If you go pok-

ing into our old musty creeds, which our people so devoutly and ignorantly reverence and respect, you will stir up a stench such as even we could not endure; then, too, it will make us appear both small and foolish, and as not half-earning our salaries and not half-deserving the *reverence* we now enjoy. Let us alone! is the cry of the clergy, as a whole, even if a few may be found to dissent from it and to seek for and speak out the truth at any cost. And this cry of the "clergy" is joined in by a large sectarian following.

We exhort all God's true church—the one church, which includes *all consecrated believers*—to awake to the principles of the Reformation, to a recognition of the *right of individual judgment* upon religious questions. Demand Scriptural proofs for all you are asked to believe; take neither the *decisions* of Rome, nor those of Westminster, nor those of any smaller councils or synods, as final settlements of the question, "What is truth?" And be sure that you believe and confess nothing that you do not *understand* fully and clearly. To subscribe to, or confess, what you do not understand, and therefore cannot truly believe, is *solemn lying* in the presence of God

and witnesses, no matter if it be true that others, by the hundred, have done the same before you. If you did this once, thoughtlessly, even though it were years ago, in joining a sect, now that your attention is called to it, you are bound to procure a copy of the "covenant," or "articles of faith," the belief of which you confessed publicly, and after careful, prayerful study of it, if you find that you do not so believe, you will be bound to deny it *as publicly* as you confessed it, or else forfeit all claim to honesty.

Require of all who shall attempt to teach in the name of the Lord, the *exact words* of the Lord or the Apostle which they claim support their teaching. Get the chapter and verse and look the matter up for yourselves, critically, examining the text and the context. Weigh and test every item of teaching which you receive as your faith, regardless of how much you esteem the person who presents it. We know that no fellow-mortal is infallible, and that His word is the only standard by which God wishes us to square and measure and build up our faith.

When you come to apply this rule you will be greatly surprised. You will find that many errors of doctrine, as well as

of custom, have been carried over from Romanism into Protestantism. Many doctrines expressed in the catechisms and confessions of faith and in the hymn-books and from the various pulpits, you will find no foundation for in the Bible; and many prominent in the Bible, you will find are ignored by one or another, and some of them by all the sects of Christendom. But hold fast to God's Word. Let God be true, if it should make every man a liar.—Rom. 3 : 4.

WHAT IS THE OBJECT?

The object of Rome in establishing a clerical class, as separate from what she terms the laity, was to gain and to hold full control of the people. Every one admitted to the Romish clergy is bound by vows to submit implicitly to the head of that system, doctrinally and in every way. Not only is such a one held fast to those doctrines and hindered from progress by the strong chain of his vow, but also by innumerable smaller ones—his living, his dignity of position, his title, and his hope of advancement in the same direction; the opinions of his friends, their pride for him, and the fact that

should he ever confess to greater light and renounce his position, he would, instead of being honored as an honest thinker, be maligned, despised and misrepresented. In a word, he would be treated as though to search the Scriptures and to think for himself and exercise the liberty wherewith Christ made all his followers free, were the unpardonable sin. And as such he would be treated as an excommunicated person, cut off from the church of Christ, now and to all eternity.

This clergy class, being thus bound hand and foot to the system, are so many live, active agents of the system in binding the people to it; and sectarian pride and rivalry and reverence for the clergy, and an indefinable fear of the future, begotten of ignorance of God's Word and fostered by the arts of priestcraft and superstition, are the cords by which the clergy of Rome bind the people to that great Antichrist system. Nor can it be denied that the Protestant clergy, though in advance of that of Rome, have the same object and many of the same methods; each clergyman being expected to exercise tact and wisdom and to act according to the intellectual status of the people with whom he has to deal.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE METHODS?

Rome's method has been to concentrate authority and power in the hands of her priesthood or clergy. Not only are they supposed to have power in their hands to shut or open heaven or hell to whom they please, but even in the present life their *authority* is impressed. Roman Catholics are expected to address their clergy, "Your Reverence," and to treat them as vastly their superiors in every respect—as holy men, whom to offend might jeopardize eternity. They are taught that every infant must be baptized, every marriage performed, and every funeral service conducted, by a clergyman; and that for any one except a clergyman to administer the simple elements of the Lord's memorial supper would be sacrilegious and profane. All of these things are so many more cords to bind the people to reverence and subjection, under the clergy, who, by reason of the claim that they have these special rights above other Christians, are caused to appear to be a special class in God's estimation. And these cords and inferences are applied by Protestants as well as by Roman Catholics.

The truth, on the contrary, is that no

such clerical office or rights are established in the Scriptures. These simple offices are services, which any brother in Christ may do for another.

We challenge any one to produce a solitary passage of Scripture giving one member of the Church of Christ more liberty or authority than another in these respects. In fact, in the matter of baptism, the true idea of the general priesthood of all Christ's followers is tacitly admitted by the "clergy"—though in a rather pinched manner, it is true—for the regulations of the various denominations provide that in the case of any unbaptized person about to die, and desiring baptism, or in the case of any infant about to die, *if no clergyman can be found* in time, any layman may perform the service. [With some in such a case when death does not ensue a sanctioning by a cleric is required to follow to make it valid.] And the only reason why the clergy *yielded* this privilege to the laity was, that having taught the people that *sprinkling is necessary to salvation from eternal torment*, it became necessary to grant the laity this privilege, in order to keep the people from reasoning too carefully upon the matter; lest they should thus force the subservient

laity to exercise common sense and reject the absurd idea that a few drops of water and a few mumbled words could prove a charm to procure God's interest in the dying one and to cause him to change his purpose and not to consign him to an eternity of torture.*

It is true that the more advanced both of clergy and laity are becoming too intelligent to attach such an awful importance to baby-sprinkling; and in proportion as they do, the emergency in which the laity may be permitted to officiate is lost sight of, so that to-day few of them know that so great a *privilege* was ever conferred upon them by the clergy. The authority to baptize is now fully in the hands of the clergy, though the rules still permit the laity to use it.

But, notwithstanding the fact that the teaching, that there are unbaptized infants in hell not a span long, is no longer heard from the pulpit, and would no longer be tolerated in civilized lands, yet there is in almost every mother's head a caution, and in her heart a love and a fear for her

* At some future time we will consider the true import of Baptism as presented by our Lord and the apostles—the *Old Theology* upon the subject—now we must confine ourselves to our present subject.

child's eternal welfare, which leads her to have it sprinkled *as a precaution.* Indeed a case in this very city of Allegheny, in which we write, came under our notice, not long since, which shows that the papal error, both on baptism and on the authority of the clergy, has a very strong hold yet, even in this land of liberty and general intelligence. The case was that of a man and his wife who had been members of a Lutheran church, but who, through irregularity of attendance at church services and irregularity of payment of church dues, had fallen under the displeasure of the clergyman there officiating. One of their children took sick and was about to die; and as it had never been sprinkled, the parents were in great distress; and conquering his pride for the sake of his child's eternal welfare, the father went time and again, and finally accompanied by his sick and weeping wife, to entreat the clergyman to come and save the child by baptizing it; but he refused to come, telling them that it was what their conduct deserved; and possibly he superstitiously believed that these parents being no longer in good and regular standing in his church, the child must be counted as a child of unbelieving parents which

could not be brought to God's favor even by the sprinkling of water. But no matter what we should say about the efficacy or non-efficacy of the drops of water, the incident shows the power of the clergy and the authority they are supposed to have, even among Protestants.

The Roman Catholic clergy add other cords to bind the people, such as the confessional, the use of "holy candles," "holy water," "holy burying grounds," etc., which the greater intelligence of Protestants would not generally submit to.

ORDER AMONG THE ROYAL PRIESTS.

But in showing that the Scriptures recognize no separate clergy class, but that the entire Church of Christ is the Priesthood, and that they each and all have the *same authority* to do anything that the Lord and the apostles enjoined, as they find they have the ability, let no one suppose that we urge disorder. It is proper that each congregation should select or elect some of their number, *best qualified*, for these services. But it should always be remembered that the one who thus serves belongs to no higher class or caste than his brethren who chose him to thus minister or serve. "All ye are brethren, and

one is your Master." Such a servant of the church is no more reverend or sacred than others, though if he be a very faithful and Christ-like servant he should be esteemed very highly "*for his work's sake*," because of loving, faithful service, but for no other reason. (1 Thes. 5 : 13.) He is not a "clergyman" in God's sight; for God recognizes no such class, and his Word authorizes no such distinction.

Whatever "*authority*" such a minister or servant of the church possesses, is *given* him; he possesses no more "authority" than the humblest of his "brethren," the entire church, any of whom has the authority of God's Word (Matt. 28 : 19, 20) to declare and to do any or every thing which it enjoins, according to his talents and opportunities and the desires of his fellow-believers to be served by him. Authority to preach or otherwise minister cannot therefore be *given* by other ministers, or by conferences, synods, etc. Each royal priest is the peer of each other one in authority and dignity of priesthood, though in talents, intelligence, etc., and therefore in fitness, they are not all equals. The choice of one or more to specially represent and serve all, as ministers, implies, or should imply, that those so chos-

en have some qualifications for such service superior to others, which should be willingly and freely used for the service and benefit of all.

The tendency of intelligence has been gradually toward the recognition of this common priesthood of the church. "Baptists," "Congregationalists," and "Disciples" have recognized it more full and more clearly than others; though some other denominations have been gradually forced by growing intelligence to permit what they term "lay-representation" at conferences, etc., though in such a manner as to make the laity feel that between them and the clergy there is a great gulf fixed.

While glad to acknowledge that Baptists, Congregationalists and Disciples approach the true idea, that the entire church is the royal priesthood and that each congregation stands independent of the jurisdiction and authority of all others, yet we beg them to consider that their theory is not fully carried out; and, still worse, that the tendency among them is backward toward centralization, clericism, denominationalism; and far worse still, that the people "love to have it so" (Jer. 5 : 31), and take pride in their growing *denominational strength*, which means

their growing loss of individual freedom.

It is only of late that these could be called sects or denominations. Formerly each congregation stood independently, like the churches of the apostles' times, and would have resented any attempt on the part of other congregations to dictate regulations or faith, and would have scorned to be known as in any sense bound into a sect or denomination. But the example of others, and pride to be parts or members of a large and influential band of churches known by one name, and all confessing to one faith, and ruled over by a council of ministers resembling the assemblies and conferences and councils of other denominations, has led these generally into similar bondage. But above all other influences leading them backward to bondage has been the false idea concerning the authority of the clergy. The people, not Scripturally informed on the subject, are swayed much by the customs and forms of others. Their unlearned "clergymen" follow carefully and scrupulously every form and ceremony and detail suggested by their more learned clerical brethren, lest they should be thought "*irregular.*" And their more learned clergymen are shrewd enough to see how

they can take advantage of the ignorance of the others to gradually create a denominational power in which they shall be able to shine as chief lights. First, it is suggested that certain doctrines or customs are not according to Baptist or Congregational *usage*, and the next step is to boycott such a congregation or minister as does not harmonize with the General Association, by dropping it or him from representation in the association. This is regarded as a punishment and disgrace, and most congregations and ministers will submit rather than incur it; whereas the fact is, that there should be no such association formed. Each individual and congregation should stand free.

A WARNING TO PROTESTANTS.

A careful survey and study of the field will show that the spirit of reform on this subject of clerical authority, which was in progress for some time, has really ceased; and their present movement is backward, toward the assumption of greater authority on the part of the clergy. The reason for this retrogression lies in the fact that the spirit of freedom and independence in religious thought, on the part of the masses of professed Christians,

is being swallowed up by worldliness and money-getting and pleasure-seeking; consequently they have neither time nor desire for matters of faith and doctrine, and permit themselves to be tightly bridled by the clergy. And this decline in individual liberty and equality is regarded by the clergy as desirable, as a supposed necessity, because here and there in their congregations are a few "peculiar people," who partially appreciate their rights and liberties, and who are growing both in grace and knowledge *beyond* the clergy. These are causing trouble to the creed-bound clergy by questioning doctrines long unquestioned, and by demanding reasons and Scriptural proofs for them. Since they cannot be answered Scripturally or reasonably the only way to meet them and to settle them is, by brow-beating, and a show or claim of clerical authority and superiority, which holds itself bound to account in doctrinal matters only to fellow-clergymen and not to laymen.

But some in the pews are to-day as well or better educated than the occupant of the pulpit, and it will no longer do to claim that the laity are so ignorant that they can not comprehend; and the people have learned that the big words

of technical, clerical phraseology are used to hide and not to teach the truth. Hence the individual and educational superiority of the clergy can no longer be given as an excuse for arbitrary definitions of Scriptural statements and doctrines.

The doctrine of "apostolic succession" —the claim that the laying on of the hands of a bishop conveys to a man an *ability* to teach and expound the Scriptures—still holds Romanists and Episcopalians, who fail to see that the very men thus said to be qualified to teach are among the least able; none of them indeed seems to be any more able either to comprehend or to teach the Scriptures than before being thus authorized; and many certainly are decidedly injured by the arrogance, self-conceit and assumed authority to lord it over their brethren, which seem to be the only things they do receive from the "holy hands." However, Catholics and Episcopalians are making the most of this Papal error, and are more successful in smothering the spirit of inquiry than others.

Recently, however, in view of the growing intelligence of the people, the tendency among clergymen is to disclaim *personal* superiority or authority and to place

and is not to be spared from it, but must be allowed to pass through it; and secondly, by the present experiences with trouble and sorrow and pain, all of which are but elements of death, mankind is learning a lesson and laying up in store an experience with sin and its awful concomitants, sorrow, pain and death, which will be valuable in that Millennial age, when each shall be required to choose between good and evil. The evil they learn first, now; the good and its blessed results and rewards, but dimly seen now, will be fully displayed then,—during the Millennium.

SPECIAL PROVIDENCES FOR THE SAINTS.

But some one inquires, If this be God's plan, for redeeming the world by the death of his Son and justifying and restoring all who believe in and accept of him, and obey and love righteousness, why did not the Millennial reign of Christ with its favorable conditions and powerful restraints begin at once, as soon as Christ had given the *ransom price* at Calvary; instead of compelling those who would follow righteousness, to sail through bloody seas and suffer for righteousness sake? Or else, why not have postponed the

vate judgment, are required to believe whatever these councils decree to be the truth. The same tendency is observable in all denominations of Protestantism; and we predict, what is even now suggested by prominent Protestant clergymen, that ere long Protestants will unite in a General Council which will decree and settle what shall, and what shall not, be received as divine truth.

In view of these facts and tendencies, we sound an alarm to all who hold to the original doctrine of the Reformation—the right of individual judgment. You and I cannot hope to stem the current and to prevent what is coming, but we can, by the grace of God, imparted through his truth, be overcomers and get the victory over these errors (Rev. 20: 4, 6), and as "overcomers" be granted a place in the glorified priesthood of the incoming Millennial age.—See, Rev. 1: 6; 5: 10.

Demand a "Thus saith the Lord" for all you accept as your faith.—Acts 2: 40.

ADDRESS— TOWER TRACT SOCIETY,
ALLEGHENY CITY, PA.

Helps for Bible Study supplied at low prices; and tracts given gratis, or books loaned, to the poor in spirit who are poor in pocket.